

Who Am I and What Am I?

Human beings form the last stage in the evolutionary ladder of the creation. In human beings consciousness is fully and clearly reflected in a physical body made of the five rudimental factors derived from the Cosmic body of the Qualified Supreme Entity (Saguña Brahma). This clear reflection of consciousness is unit consciousness (átman), and the physical body of the five factors which receives this reflection is called the human body. Thus a human being has unit consciousness (átman) and body. Being the possessor of these two shows that a human being is neither of these. If human beings were átman (unit consciousness) they could not claim it as their átman, and alternatively were they bodies only, they could not say, "This is my body." They are different from these two. There is some other entity in human beings which claims the possession of átman and body. That other entity appears to be the owner of átman and the body. What then is that other entity?

The pure feeling of "I" is only an abstract idea. A little introspection would show that this feeling of "I exist" is an idea. It comes about as a result of thinking. This feeling of "I" can come only when there is consciousness; and it is with consciousness or jñána that one can take an idea and think or perform some action. The feeling of "I" is, therefore, a mental projection of consciousness; or, to be explicit, it can be said that without consciousness, or jñána, the knowledge of existence and thereby the idea of the feeling of "I" cannot be formed. Átman is unit consciousness or unit puruśa, and as it is within the scope of Saguña Brahma, it will be qualified by the principles of Prakṛti in the same way as has occurred in the case of Puruśa in Saguña Brahma. It is due to the qualifying influence of the sentient principle of Prakṛti that átman acquires the knowledge of existence or that the pure feeling of "I" comes into being. It is by this idea of existence that the feeling of "I" is formed, and hence the individual's identity as "I" is this idea only. This is thus only a projection formed due to the qualifying influence of sentient Prakṛti on unit consciousness. This feeling of "I" is, therefore, not átman or unit consciousness. The human beings' individuality or their feeling of "I" is not unit consciousness. It is only an objective idea of unit consciousness, the knowledge of which comes about by the qualifying influence of Prakṛti. Human beings' feeling of "I" is thus entirely dependent on unit consciousness, just as the existence of a plank of wood is dependent on a tree. The plank cannot be called a tree, and similarly this entity of "I" cannot be unit consciousness. It is only an idea dependent on unit consciousness, formed as a result of the qualifying influence of sentient Prakṛti on it.

It has been shown earlier that buddhitattva comes into being due to the qualifying influence of the sentient principle of Prakṛti on the unit consciousness. This also brings about the feeling of "I" and creates the knowledge of existence of unit consciousness. The individual entity of "I", therefore, is not unit consciousness; it is buddhitattva, which is only a part of his or her mind.

The "I" entity of human beings is buddhitattva, which is subtler than ahaṁtattva and citta. What then are ahaṁtattva and citta? It has been explained in the first chapter that ahaṁtattva (ego) comes into being as a result of the qualifying influence of the mutative principle of Prakṛti on buddhitattva, whereupon the latter manifests itself as ahaṁtattva. The ahaṁtattva (ego), on being further qualified by the static principle of Prakṛti, is manifested as citta. It is, in fact, buddhitattva, or the pure feeling of "I", which is manifested as ahaṁtattva (ego) and citta due to the qualifying influence of the mutative and

static principles of Prakṛti. Ahaṁtattva (ego) and citta are only cruder functional forms of the human being's "I" entity. The human being's mind is, therefore, a further projection of his feeling of "I" (buddhitattva), and is made of that entity only.

Unit consciousness or ātman is reflected only when there is a physical body made of the five rudimental factors of the Macrocosm. Buddhitattva comes into being as a result of the influence of sentient Prakṛti on unit consciousness, and so buddhitattva, or the feeling of "I", is also dependent on the physical body. Since Buddhitattva pervades every bit of the body, one feels the presence of "I" in every part of the body and is prone to identify this "I" with the body. It has, however, been explained earlier that this feeling of "I" and the body are not the same entity. They are different – the feeling of "I" is buddhitattva, and the physical body merely forms a shelter (ādhāra) for it.

A human being's feeling of "I" is thus neither his or her unit consciousness nor his or her body; it is only the mental creation of unit consciousness, termed as buddhitattva, and this "I" is further manifested as the other two functional forms of mind – ahaṁtattva (ego) and citta.